

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

# STATE

MAGAZINE

IMAGINE...

*Happy Holidays*



DECEMBER 2007

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Anything one person can imagine, others can make real. Happy Holidays.  
*Photograph by Corbis*

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## Happy Holidays

Every holiday season, as one year turns to another, we take a moment to step back from everything, to put the rush of our daily lives into some perspective and to give thanks for what is most meaningful and important to us. Our thoughts turn to our friends, our families and our colleagues serving overseas. And that is what I wish to give thanks for most of all this year: our people, you.

This is a challenging time for our country and for all of us. Rarely has our government been focused on more hard problems at once—from Pakistan and North Korea, to Sudan and Burma, to Afghanistan and, of course, Iraq. Challenges like these, and many others, are far different from the ones that you and I might have anticipated even a few years ago. They signal that our world is in the midst of a critical time of transition, and our government, like all of us who serve in it, is adapting to succeed. Change like this is never easy.

I understand that we who have the honor of leading this Department are asking a lot of you right now, and every opportunity I get, I remind our fellow Americans, and especially their representatives in Congress, of the hard but vital work that their diplomats are doing every day on their behalf. I remind them that more than ever before in our Department's history, more of you are serving far away from your families and friends, in difficult and often dangerous places around the world. I remind them that many of you are making sacrifices in service to your country, shoulder to shoulder with our men and women in uniform.

Ours tasks are indeed great, and they demand much of us all, but I believe that our world and our work today are defined far more by the opportunities we have than the challenges we face. We have an

opportunity to rid the Korean peninsula of nuclear weapons. We have an opportunity to help Israelis and Palestinians achieve peace. And we now have an opportunity, despite the setbacks we have faced, to help



the Iraqi people bring lasting security and prosperity to their free nation.

It is an honor to serve our nation at this time of challenge and opportunity, and it is an honor to serve alongside such dedicated and hard-working people as you. The work we are doing together is hard, and it is sometimes trying, but it is vital to securing the interests of the United States. The State Department is an extended family, and as we perform this work we must support and strengthen one another as families do. I am personally committed to ensuring that each member of this family has the resources and support that they need.

I thank you all for your service, I wish you a happy holiday season and I look forward with hope and confidence to what we will achieve together in the next year. ■

“I believe that our world and our work today are defined far more by the opportunities we have than the challenges we face.”

# Honoring All Sacrifices

I write in reference to the letter from William S. Shepard concerning the establishment of the plaque in memory of Foreign Service family members who have lost their lives overseas. Mr. Shepard was indeed instrumental in having this plaque placed in the lobby of the State Department, and it is fitting that we now can memorialize the sacrifices made by family members as well as those of FS employees.

The American Foreign Service Association conducts a solemn ceremony every year during Foreign Affairs Day in front of the AFSA Memorial Plaque and provides the floral wreaths that are placed in front of each of the plaques. Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide and AFSA jointly provide the floral wreath in front of the family plaque.

**John Naland**  
*AFSA President*

## Tony Freeman's Legacy

The September issue carried the unhappy news of Tony Freeman's passing. He was the Secretary of State's Labor Adviser for many years and one of the last of what I would call real labor attachés, persons who believed passionately in two things: 1) the U.S. interest in understanding those who want to change the status quo and 2) the need to steal the initiative from the communists during the Cold War. U.S. support for the international free trade-union movement did both, saving Western Europe after World War II to the end of the Cold War.

In response to a question from the defense attaché at a country team meeting in La Paz on the role of the labor attaché, Tony succinctly explained it this way:

"Well, the ambassador talks to the President, the political counselor to political leaders, the econ counselor to central bankers, the commercial attaché to

business fat cats and the defense attaché to the high command. All of you guys talk to people who are pretty much satisfied with things. I talk to people who aren't. My job is to keep the rest of you honest."

Of course, that was an oversimplification, but there was a real grain of truth delivered in Tony's own New Jersey style. He exemplified the best in that labor attaché tradition and was deeply attached to clear, honest reporting to Washington about forces for change. His work on the Italian Left in the 1980s led to later active support for Solidarity and showed how important it is to have the right person at the right place.

Seems to me that today's events call for more of Tony's qualities.

**Stuart H. Lippe**  
*FSo-retired*

I was saddened to read in the September issue of the untimely death of retired

Foreign Service officer Anthony G. "Tony" Freeman. Tony was my boss at the U.S. Embassy in Rome in the early 1980s. I subsequently had the pleasure of working with him on several issues in the later 1980s and 1990s, when he was the senior Department official responsible for international labor affairs.

Tony was one of the last of the old-time Foreign Service labor attachés, a specialization that unfortunately has not fared well in this era of constricted budgets and transformational diplomacy. Throughout his career he combined New Jersey street smarts with a keen intellect, political acumen and a strong sense of social justice—making him the consummate Foreign Service labor officer. He was both mentor and friend to me and many others. He will be missed.

**Nicholas Stigliani**  
*FSo-retired*

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## Working Together to Help Others

Let me take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones around the world a joyful holiday season.

I feel truly honored to be working alongside men and women who are helping Americans and providing opportunities to those who need them around the world. As we approach the New Year, let's continue to look for ways to shine the spotlight on all the good work that is being done by our Civil Service and Foreign Service employees.

For the second year in a row, undergraduates have ranked the State Department as the number one employer among all federal agencies. I think that is a great tribute to the 17 Diplomats in Residence and the 10 recruiters that we have based here in Washington. But I also believe that all of us can and should be involved in our public outreach and recruitment efforts.

In the coming months, I plan to visit a number of high schools, because that is when young people become engaged in world studies. I invite all of you to join me in visiting schools and talking to alumni organizations, clubs and places of worship about the work that we are doing. This is vital to the future of the Department.

You can learn more about our Hometown Diplomats Program by calling the Office of Public Liaison at 202-647-5879. Those of you who have lived or served in Iraq may want to contact our Office of Intergovernmental Affairs at 202-647-6575 to learn more about our Home from Iraq Diplomats Program.

Another way to highlight the important work we do at State is to nominate our colleagues for highly visible, much-deserved awards. There are a number of such awards out there, such as the distinguished Partnership for Public Service's Service to America Medals. This is a wonderful way to accentuate the accomplishments and commitments of the Department's outstanding public servants.

This year, Edward Messmer, a Foreign Service officer currently serving in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, was awarded the prestigious 2007 Service to

America International Affairs Medal based on his outstanding contributions during the 2006 conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. He averted a humanitarian crisis by arranging to get fuel reserves into Lebanon.



At the awards ceremony, Mr. Messmer spoke publicly of his satisfaction in working for a country "that has the resources, the intent, the commitment and the experience to do good in the world."

In previous years, we have had a number of other finalists and winners who were recognized for their efforts, ranging from organizing local elections in Iraq to organizing international preparations for an avian flu pandemic to cracking down on opium poppy cultivation and narcotics trafficking.

The 2008 Service to America Medals program is now open for nominations. Every Bureau should actively look for people to nominate for these awards, which are accompanied by cash prizes ranging from \$3,000 to \$10,000. The competition is open to U.S. citizen, full-time employees and those who retired after September 19, 2007.

Nominations can be made by March 3, 2007, directly to [servicetoamericamedals.org/SAM/nominations/](http://servicetoamericamedals.org/SAM/nominations/), which has all the details on the process. They may be submitted by

any person familiar with the individual's work.

This year's award categories include:

*Call to Service*—recognizes a federal employee under the age of 35 with less than five years of federal service whose professional achievements reflect the important contributions that a new generation brings to public service.

*Career Achievement*—recognizes a federal employee with 20 plus years of federal civil service for significant accomplishments throughout a lifetime of achievement in public service.

*Citizens Services Medal*—recognizes a federal employee for a significant contribution to the nation in activities that serve the general public and provide for the common good.

*Homeland Security*—recognizes a federal employee for a significant contribution to the nation in activities related to homeland security, such as border and transportation security, emergency preparedness and response, intelligence and law enforcement.

*Justice and Law Enforcement*—recognizes a federal employee for a significant contribution to the nation in activities related to civil rights, criminal justice, fraud detection and prevention and counterterrorism.

*National Security and International Affairs*—recognizes a federal employee for a significant contribution to the nation in activities related to national security, such as defense and military affairs, and intelligence, and activities related to international affairs, such as diplomacy, foreign assistance and trade.

*Science & Environment*—recognizes a federal employee for a significant contribution to the nation in activities related to biomedicine, economics, energy, information technology, meteorology, resource conservation and space.

Together, let's send a powerful message to the public about the relevance of our work and inspire a new generations of Americans to serve.

We welcome your suggestions via unclassified e-mail at "DG Direct." ■

# NEWS

From left, Media Specialist Agnes Caballa, Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney and Cultural Specialist Tony Perez display the book and their citation.



## A Way with Words

Embassy Manila Staff Members Write Popular Children's Book

In late August, the Manila Critics Circle recognized the book *Inang Bayan's New Clothes* with a nomination for Best Children's Book of 2007. The short book was written by two long-time employees of the public affairs section of the U.S. Embassy in the Philippines, Tony Perez and Agnes Caballa.

The book tells of two young girls—one Muslim and the other Christian—who combine their traditional seamstress talents to create beautiful clothes for Inang Bayan, a mythological personification of the Philippine motherland. The Critics Circle also presented a citation, accepted on behalf of the embassy by Ambassador Kristie A.

Kenney, for exemplary contributions to Philippine children's literature through this writing project.

Perez has written more than 30 plays, and Caballa is a veteran of the dramatic and musical stage. The concept for an uplifting and patriotic interfaith story came from Perez, while Caballa provided expertise on the traditional costumes portrayed in the book. A local graphic artist, Frances Alvarez, provided the full-color illustrations as well as drawings of traditional ethnic costumes that young readers can cut out and use to dress the paper doll version of Inang Bayan that comes with the book. Observant readers

will find likenesses of Perez's and Caballa's own grandchildren peeking out of windows in some illustrations.

*Inang Bayan's New Clothes* is available in English and Visayan, a traditional language of trade and commerce on the multi-lingual southern island of Mindanao. The book project was jointly funded by the PAS and the Military Information Support Team as a contribution to Philippine and U.S. government efforts to fight terrorism, particularly in majority Muslim areas in the southern Philippines. It was distributed free to thousands of children in Mindanao and has been donated to schools and libraries throughout the Philippines.



## Chiefs of Mission Attend Regional Energy Conference

Department officials and chiefs of mission gather during the energy conference.

U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Ross Wilson hosted chiefs of mission from Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and senior officials from the Departments of State and Energy at a Regional Energy Conference in Istanbul in September. The conference was called to discuss continuing U.S. support to help countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia regions develop their oil and gas resources and to get those resources to markets most efficiently and in a way that complements European energy security.

Given increasing pressure on world energy supplies and growing energy demand, the conference allowed chiefs of mission to discuss global energy security issues by giving their assessments and sharing their ideas on the economics and politics of energy issues. The conference also touched on the importance of identifying and developing traditional, fossil-fuel-based resources and alternative fuels and renewable energy sources.

“There’s nothing like getting our ambas-

sadors and chiefs of mission, with career-long knowledge and expertise in this region and specific expertise and institutional memory in the energy sector, into the same room for a discussion,” said Under Secretary for Economic, Energy and Agricultural Affairs Reuben Jeffery. “We got the best input and judgment that we could possibly have and some lively debate, and we set the basis for continuing our support of countries in the region as they develop their own energy strategies and resources.”

## AFSA SEEKS 2008 AWARD NOMINATIONS

AFSA is calling for nominations for the 2008 Exemplary Performance Awards and the Constructive Dissent Awards, which are based on integrity and professional courage rather than performance of duties.

AFSA said the latter awards promote constructive and creative dissent (within the system) on an issue that affects the work of the Foreign Service.

The four dissent awards are: the Tex Harris Award for Foreign Service Specialists, the W. Averell Harriman Award for junior officers (FS 6-4), the William R. Rivkin Award for mid-career officers (FS 3-1) and the Christian A. Herter Award for senior officers (FE OC-CA).

Nominations should include:

- The name of the award for which the person is being nominated and the nominee’s name, grade, agency and position.
  - The nominator’s name, grade, agency, position and association with the nominee.
  - The justification, which should discuss the actions and qualities that qualify the nominee, giving examples of accomplishments.
- AFSA also offers three awards for exemplary performance of

assigned or voluntary duties at an overseas post that constitute extraordinary contributions to effectiveness, professionalism and morale. They are:

**The Delavan Award** for a Foreign Service office management specialist who has made a significant contribution to post or office effectiveness and morale beyond the framework of her or his job responsibilities.

**The M. Juanita Guess Award** for a community liaison officer who demonstrated outstanding leadership, dedication, initiative or imagination in assisting the families of Americans at an overseas post.

**The Avis Bohlen Award** for a family member of a Foreign Service employee whose relations with the American and foreign communities at post have advanced U.S. interests, in the tradition of the late Avis Bohlen.

The procedures for nominating someone for one of the exemplary performance awards are the same as for the constructive dissent awards.

Winners receive \$2,500 and a framed certificate and will be honored at a reception in late June 2008. Further details are on the AFSA Web site at [www.afsa.org/awards.cfm](http://www.afsa.org/awards.cfm).



Ambassador Craig R. Stapleton, center, meets with the embassy's Muslim staff.

# EMBASSY PARIS MUSLIM EMPLOYEES CELEBRATE RAMADAN

Muslim employees of the U.S. Embassy in Paris prayed during Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting, in a room at the embassy and, after 30 days of fasting, celebrated the Eid-al-Fitr, the end of Ramadan, in the post's Executive Lounge. They were joined there by the Ambassador, deputy chief of mission and public affairs officer and other distinguished embassy staff members, and ate foods from many countries.

The embassy's Muslim employees said they appreciated the support of the Ambassador and management team and called the event remarkable, historic and entertaining. The event was organized by Haji Mohammad Saifullah.

## HR Upgrades Management Software

The Bureau of Human Resources has just released its latest upgrade to the Post Personnel System, a human resources management and tracking application that feeds overseas personnel data into a consolidated database in Washington, D.C.

Enhancements to Post Personnel include security modifications to protect employee Social Security numbers; dynamic reporting that allows standard report modifications to be requested and managed from the Help Desk of the Post Administrative Software Suite; and new fields that capture additional information on local employee compensation, benefits and pay-plan approval status. This release allows American employees at post to update their location and their dependents' location in Post Personnel through WebPASS e-Services.

The data entered in e-Services will be shared with the Department's Evacuation Management System, which is used to manage employee drawdowns and facilitate the issuance of travel orders during crises. The system enables authorized users to view and modify American employee/dependent data, such as current location, emergency contact and travel itinerary, and can generate reports that provide evacuation status information for posts and Washington.

The Post Personnel System resides on 175 servers worldwide and is the official data source for U.S. personnel under Chief of Mission authority. A detailed description of the latest changes, along with more information about the Evacuation Management System, can be found at <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/PS>.

# STATE

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The submission deadline for the February issue is December 15. The deadline for the March issue is January 15.



# CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

NATIVE AMERICAN DANCERS TOUR CENTRAL AMERICA **BY ANNA MARIA ADAMO, CARMEN FONCEA, MARJORIE STERN AND VERÓNICA VÁSQUEZ**

When the public affairs sections at the U.S. embassies in El Salvador and Guatemala brought the Yellow Bird Native American dancers to those nations this summer, almost 5,000 Salvadorans and Guatemalans attended the group's 10 performances of authentic Native American songs and dances, held in nine locations. There were also dances and ceremonies by local indigenous groups, storytelling sessions, a crafts demonstration and a Native American dance workshop.

One little girl in the village of Izalco, which has the largest indigenous population in El Salvador, said "This is extraordinary."

The two-week program, from June 19 to 30, had the financial support of the

Performing Arts Initiative of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and a significant contribution from each post. The tour was designed to demonstrate an important part of U.S. culture, especially to indigenous audiences, and to foster intercultural exchange. The troupe consisted of skilled dancers, musicians and storytellers whose performances included the hoop dance (a metaphor of the circle of life), rainbow dance (with a skirt made of "raindrops") and eagle dance.

The Yellow Bird dancers participating in the Central American visit were Ken Duncan (an Apache who founded the troupe), Ken Duncan Jr., Tony Duncan (four-time World Men's Hoop Dance cham-

pion), David Brush (from the Cheyenne and Lakota Nations), Cheryl Lynn Abe (from the Ojibway and Navajo Nations) and Violet John (Cree Nation).

## PROMOTING PRIDE

The shows promoted respect for American indigenous traditions and Central Americans' pride in their own heritage. The tour also provided a connection to distant indigenous leaders and laid the groundwork for future contacts and cooperation.

In Santa Cruz del Quiché in Guatemala, residents honored the group with a Mayan ceremony and a dance performance in the Mayan ruins of Gumarcaaj. In Sololá, the troupe was treated to a lively display of



**Opposite page:** Tony Duncan (four-time World Men's Hoop Dance champion) shows his skill doing the hoop dance. **Above:** The Yellow Bird dancers include, from left, rear row, Ken Duncan Jr., Tony Duncan, Violet John, Ken Duncan Sr., Cheryl Abe (from the Ojibway and Navajo Nations) and David Brush, in front.

Kaqchiquel music and dance. The Yellow Birds also met with local leaders in Quiché and Sololá, sharing their cultures and experiences as indigenous peoples.

In El Salvador, the Mayan and Pipil indigenous groups of Izalco shared their ancestral blessings, dances and prayers, and the program provided a learning experience for 30 dance students of the National Dance School. In a two-hour master class on Native American dance techniques, attendees got a closer look at the Apache traditions. One grateful student gave her dance teacher a bead necklace.

The tour included free public concerts and outreach to youth, especially outside the capital cities. In El Salvador, about 65 percent of the attendees were between 7 and 18 years old. In Santa Ana, El Salvador, eight-year-olds asked the Yellow Birds to explain the meaning of the words they sing and the colors they wear. In Guatemala, the troupe answered questions about Native

Americans and exchanged ideas and experiences. In San Salvador, 580 people attended the show at a theater, and the performance in Guatemala at the lakeside village of San Lucas Toliman drew a crowd of 1,000.

### GOODWILL OUTREACH

There were also unexpected reactions. The dancers' visit to a Salvadoran archeological site turned into an impromptu baseball game when a teacher recognized the troupe's leader after watching their show on TV.

By highlighting the nations' similarities and respect for indigenous cultures, the Yellow Bird visit created goodwill and supported the active provincial outreach efforts of both embassies, including the Virtual Presence Post for the Mayan highlands region in Guatemala. Since the visit, the public affairs section in Guatemala has sponsored 18 undergraduate scholarships for indigenous students at a local university and worked with Save the

Children USA to provide educational materials and teacher training to assist 2,000 grade-schoolers in eight indigenous schools around Lake Atitlan. The embassy has brought music and dance groups of Sololá youth to Guatemala City for two performances and is circulating to Mayan villages a poster show of photos from the Yellow Birds' tour.

All in all, in both El Salvador and Guatemala, the dance and music of the Yellow Birds opened the door to deepened cooperation, investments in people and greater understanding between American and Central American native peoples. ■

*Anna Adamo is the public affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala City, Carmen Foncea is a member of that embassy's PAO staff, Marjorie Stern is cultural affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador and Verónica Vásquez is the cultural assistant at that embassy.*



A tanker truck loads the fertilizer at the conversion plant.

# Poison into Plowshares

U.S. ASSISTANCE HELPS TURN ROCKET FUEL INTO FERTILIZER **BY DANIEL RENNA**

Nestled in the mountains of northwestern Armenia lies the spent rocket fuel from the missiles once deployed in this former Soviet republic. Dozens of aging fuel tanks scattered in a high, alpine meadow are leaking this toxic material into the groundwater. However, thanks to a U.S.-sponsored program, this situation will not exist much longer.

When the Russian government collected former Soviet missiles following the collapse of the Soviet Union more than 15 years ago, it left behind the toxic sludge of

the rockets' fuel. Large stocks of a highly toxic mix of rocket fuel chemicals, called *mélange*, were abandoned in Armenia and throughout the former Soviet Union.

In the 1990s, many private chemical factories in Eastern Europe, especially in the former East Germany, developed a method for neutralizing the caustic, nitrogen-based *mélange* into harmless potassium nitrate, a valuable fertilizer additive. But in the former Soviet republics, the storage tanks were corroding, making the *mélange* too dangerous to move. Now, however, something substantial is being done about this toxic relic from the Cold War.

## Chemical Solution

More than 20,000 tons of *mélange* are scattered across the post-Soviet landscape, and those nations have neither the

resources nor know-how to make it safe. However, a project to convert the rocket fuel to fertilizer—without the risk of transport—has been developed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Safely managing the conversion process is expensive. Therefore, OSCE sought resources from its member states to demonstrate that it could eliminate this hazard. Officers at the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan and at the U.S. Mission to the OSCE in Vienna thought that supporting this environmental project was worth doing for its own sake and would help build the prestige of the OSCE in Armenia, gaining more Armenian support for such OSCE goals as building democracy and supporting human rights. With strong support from the Office of the Coordinator for U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia, the United States committed \$1.6 million from FREEDOM Support Act funds to convert 872 tons of toxic rocket fuel in Armenia. Germany and Finland also provided important support to this project.

The conversion of the rocket fuel to fertilizer began in August 2006 and was nearly half complete before winter weather forced engineers to call a halt. Spring comes slowly to the Caucasus, but the process resumed and conversion was completed in early September. Managers of the project are rightly proud of their safety record: zero injuries and environmental mishaps.

The process produced a nitrogen-rich fertilizer dressing that is provided to farmers in this remote, impoverished region. The project's impact goes far beyond local farmers, however, as the tons



of calcium used in the conversion are mined in Armenia.

Most importantly, an environmental disaster was averted and the water supply protected.

The OSCE and NATO plan to use the expertise gained during this project to help tackle the massive *mélange* problem in other nations of the region. Ukraine alone has some 16,000 tons of this toxic legacy. ■

*The author is an economic officer at the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan.*



Touring the conversion facility are, from left, Armenian General Tigran Gasparyan, Ambassador Julie Finley of the U.S. Mission to OSCE and OSCE Head of Office Ambassador Vladimir Pryakhin.

The PRT Ninewa team gathers.



# DIPLOMATS ON THE GROUND

MULTI-AGENCY RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS HELP REBUILD IRAQ'S PROVINCES  
**BY RODNEY HUNTER AND MICHAEL HANKEY**

As Foreign Service officers who are part of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Ninewa, Iraq, we wear the standard State Department attire when we climb into a Humvee to go to a forward operating base: coat and tie and full protective gear.

Safety is a primary concern for the members of PRT Ninewa, located in northern Iraq. A highly trained and capable unit from the co-located U.S. military brigade protects the PRT's movements and provides security at its meetings.

Even in this difficult security environment, PRT Ninewa is all about meeting people throughout the province nearly every day. The PRT's mandate is outreach—from the provincial governor's office to local womens' groups—as is the case with all of the two dozen other PRTs in Iraq.

## QUICK RESPONSE

The PRT also stands ready to assist when disaster strikes. On August 14, al Qaeda in Iraq attacked the northern Iraqi towns of Qahtaniya and Al Jazeera with mammoth truck bombs, killing

hundreds and wounding hundreds more. In the ethnically and religiously mixed society of northern Iraq's Ninewa Province, the bombs were a shock, particularly since Iraqi government officials had made substantial strides in local governance.

Coalition and Iraqi military teams secured the site, providing aid and guarding against further attacks. The PRT worked closely with provincial government officials, local leaders, U.S. Agency for International Development partners and international nongovernmental organizations, and reported regularly to Washington.

The local and national Iraqi officials responding to the crisis addressed the basic political, economic and security needs. Behind the scenes, PRT team members worked with Iraqi government officials so that the recovery effort could move quickly and effectively.

Such work is the role of PRT Ninewa. Ninewa presents a wide variety of important issues. The province has Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul, and a diverse population with a tradition of tolerance. Take away the flak jackets and Humvees, and the PRT's work is much like that of a U.S. consulate or embassy.



The Iraqi government's oil distribution representative, Dr. Al-Zibari, far left, meets with PRT Ninewa's governance team. Team members, from Dr. Al-Zibari's left; are PRT Ninewa Governance Section Chief Jim Holtsnider, PRT Ninewa Governance Team Bilingual/Bicultural Adviser Genny Youkhana, Reconstruction Section Representative Captain Kelly Johnson and Governance Section Representative Major Pete Dragonette.

## IRAQI SOLUTIONS

PRT Ninewa benefits from a unique amalgamation of Foreign Service officers, active-duty and reserve soldiers, USAID professionals and members of other agencies, including the Departments of Treasury and Justice. It also has contracted civilians, including a team of gifted interpreters fluent in Arabic, Kurdish, Assyrian and other languages. These individuals form a strong team that advises and supports Iraqis on complex issues. In Ninewa, the PRT helps develop Iraqi solutions to Iraqi problems using Iraqi resources.

On any given day, one of the PRT's five sections visits representatives of the provincial government, while another travels to engage community leaders hours outside of the provincial capital. Through these trips, PRT Ninewa improves the capacity of local and provincial leaders to solve problems on their own.

Through near-daily meetings with the provincial governor or his staff on issues facing the province, visits to a local prison to identify ways to improve standards or press conferences with local journalists, the PRT

functions as the "American consulate," the term by which it is widely known here. The PRT is an integral part of this province's political and economic life.

Even on those rare days when team members stay in the office, they coordinate closely with Iraqis by telephone and e-mail to prepare for the next day's meetings. PRT Ninewa keeps abreast of the situation around the province and provides the links, support and training that local and provincial leaders need to build institutions capable of meeting their citizens' needs.

Each of the PRT's diverse programs contributes directly to building Iraqi capacity at all levels, working to make Iraqi society more capable and resilient. Because the PRT works closely with Iraqis daily, it gets a firsthand look at how courageous and dedicated Iraqis are in rebuilding their society under dangerous and difficult conditions. That insight—despite the hardships—is a powerful motivator for PRT Ninewa. ■

*Rodney Hunter and Michael Hankey are Foreign Service officers at PRT Ninewa.*

## PRT Q&A

# Questions and Answers on Provincial Reconstruction Teams

### What is a PRT?

It is a civilian-military inter-agency unit tasked with achieving the U.S. goal of a stable and self-reliant Iraq by working at the provincial and grassroots level in support of those Iraqi leaders who seek peaceful means to achieve their political objectives.

### What do PRTs do?

PRTs help provincial and local governments develop a transparent and sustained capability to govern and unlock Iraqi funds to better meet the basic needs of its citizens; promote the rule of law; accelerate political, social and economic development; and foster dialogue across Iraqi society.

### Where do PRT members come from?

PRT membership is drawn from such agencies as the Departments of State, Defense, Justice, Agriculture and Commerce; the Gulf Region Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Coalition personnel; and contract personnel. The Office of Provincial Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad provides policy guidance and support to the 25 PRTs.

# FRONTLINES REPORT

PRT DUTY IS A MULTI-NATIONAL EXPERIENCE  
BY PAUL FOLMSBEE

It's July 21, and I am in the International Zone, or "Green Zone," stuffed into an old, armored Chevrolet Suburban on my way to the al Rashid Hotel to meet with Sadr City leaders. They cannot meet with my team in Sadr City because Sheik Muqtada al Sadr bans cooperation with Coalition forces. With me are several officers and soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the 82nd Airborne—they're enjoying this.

I am the Provincial Reconstruction Team leader for Sadr City and Adhamiya—two huge sections of Baghdad. We don't live in the Green Zone but in combat outposts and forward operating bases, mostly in Adhamiya and Taji.

First-time military visitors to the Green Zone sometimes half expect to see State Department officers in blue pinstripe suits drinking lattes at sidewalk cafes, but here there are no sidewalk cafes or pinstripes. In my personal body armor and Oakley boots, I don't look that different from the soldiers.

On my July 21 sojourn, an armed guard in khaki motioned us to stop. He wanted to see our ID cards and vehicle papers. I fumbled for the papers while the soldiers, amused at being stopped (they are used to being in command), fumbled for their common access cards, ID cards issued by the Department of Defense. Communication with the guard was difficult until I realized he had no Arabic accent. Thinking back to my days in Bolivia, I realized he was Peruvian. We chatted in Spanish—I even knew his



Humvees are arrayed before a PRT headquarters.

Preparing for a mission with the 2nd BCT, 82nd Airborne are, from left, PRT Deputy Team Leader Jeffrey Bakken, BCT Commander Colonel Don Farris and PRT Team Leader Paul Folmsbee.



PHOTOGRAPHS: (TOP): MAJOR HECTOR FLORES-ORTIZ; (BOTTOM): JEFFREY BAKKEN; (OPPOSITE PAGE): MAX PRIMORAC

hometown—then quickly sorted out our paperwork and proceeded.

Baghdad can be a delight for those who have served in Latin America. The PRT's deputy team leader, Jeff Bakken, and I frequently walk from the embassy to the USAID building or another facility, a 10- to 20-minute trip. Along the way, we are greeted by South Americans, including Chileans, Argentines and Peruvians. Most are contract security guards who are so brave that, when there's an incoming rocket, they tell people to take cover before seeking shelter themselves.

In truth, the Green Zone is a smorgasbord of international folks. One day at the embassy the incoming-rocket siren went

off, and about 30 of us in the street took cover in one of the shelters nearby. We were from all over the world: India, South Africa, Eastern Europe, the Philippines, South America and, of course, the United States, as represented by two military officers and me. Jammed into the bunker, several Tamils and I started chatting; I had spent part of my childhood in Tamil Nadu. I immediately made four new friends.

Working with a PRT has been the most rewarding assignment of my career. There has been danger, but I also found dedicated officers who are making a difference, brave contractors from South America and several new friends.

*The author is a senior Foreign Service officer.*

**SECRETARY'S AWARD**

**Department Honors Wounded PRT Member** By Lawrence E. Butler

An Air Force major who served on a Provincial Reconstruction Team and was wounded after a month in Iraq is the first recipient of the Department of State Secretary's Award since 1999. Major Jose Rivera Hernandez, whose PRT is named Baghdad 1, was wounded in July when his vehicle was hit by an explosively formed projectile while traveling to meet with Iraqi counterparts in the West Rashid area of Baghdad.

Two occupants of the vehicle, active-duty military members there to protect Major Rivera, were killed, and Major Rivera and two others were severely wounded. Major Rivera lost his right thumb in the incident, and his right leg was shattered and partially severed. He is recovering at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington.

Major Rivera arrived in Baghdad in June 8, 2007, and joined Baghdad 1, which is embedded with the 4th Brigade of the 1st Infantry based at Forward Operating Base Falcon in the city's Rashid District. Major Rivera was part of a contingent of civilian specialists provided to support the "civilian surge" through an agreement between the Departments of Defense and State.

This arrangement is unique. All PRT members, even those called up for active duty, are under Chief of Mission authority, report directly to a senior State Department official and fill Department positions. Major Rivera's assignment placed him under the authority of Baghdad 1's team leader, Foreign Service Officer Timothy Zuniga-Brown.

**Nation-building Role**

Also unique is the role in nation-building that PRTs play. For instance, Major Rivera served as a public works/city management specialist. He was selected and called up from the Air Force Reserve for this duty based on his engineering experience. A veteran of overseas deployments in Iraq, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan, where he led interagency efforts in reconstruction, assistance and humanitarian programs, Major Rivera had been with Baghdad 1 for less than a month before

being wounded.

PRT leader Zuniga-Brown praised Rivera for his expertise, exemplary team spirit and bravery, saying he brought the PRT critical expertise in engineering and quality assurance, and quickly established great working relationships with his colleagues across the brigade.



Major Rivera, center, stands with the Secretary's Award and the author, at right, as his wife and daughter look on.

"More importantly, with his easy nature and willingness to help with any task at any time, Jose became a friend to every single person on the team," Zuniga-Brown continued. "We are honored that this brave soldier volunteered to serve with us on this mission."

In recognition of his contributions to the Department's PRT mission and his bravery during the attack that left him injured, Major Rivera recently was given the rarely awarded Secretary's Award.

*The author is the deputy assistant secretary for Iraq in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. ■*



PHOTOGRAPH: APPLE, INC.

# Info to Go

DETAILS ON POSTS, LIVING CONDITIONS AVAILABLE ONLINE

**BY KATE GOGGIN**

Foreign Service officers who are bidding on assignments but have doubts about job availability for their spouses or have heard that a post requires a six-month pet quarantine can get the facts by researching posts online via the Post Info To Go system at the Overseas Briefing Center's OpenNet Web site, <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/epb/epb.asp>.

Post Info To Go allows users to view OBC files, such as post welcome cables and photos from missions' OpenNet sites. It also collates materials from other offices, such as the Family Liaison Office and the Office of Overseas Schools.

Since September 2006, usage of Post Info To Go has increased by almost 300 percent as employees and managers discover the ease of finding post information available on their desktops.

"Post Intranet sites inform bidders, but each is organized differently, and it can be confusing to locate key information quickly," said Connie Hansen, coordinator of the OBC, located at the Foreign Service Institute's Transition Center. "OBC saw the need from the user's perspective to unite all the information in one place."

## **Key Resources**

Key resources at Post Info To Go include reports on employment for family members, housing photos, medical resources, security guidelines, pet-importation restrictions and school entry requirements. Post Info To Go also permits employees to send country-specific

search results to a loved one's personal e-mail address.

That made a difference to Terrence Williamson, a senior FSO and the associate dean of FSI's School of Applied Information Technology.

"Post Info To Go was extremely useful in finding pertinent information on posts of interest as well as sharing that information directly with my family," he said. "On the latter score, some information was of more critical importance to family members than it was to me, and by providing them with timely direct access, I was not the bottleneck."

Post Info To Go includes the Personal Post Insights collection. Frank and anonymous, this collection of 1,400 first-person opinions about life at post from those under Chief of Mission authority answers practical questions about daily living, such as: How do security concerns at post affect activities? What are the conditions at school? Where is the housing? and What are the family member employment opportunities?

The Insights collection is sometimes compared to the Real Post Reports found on the Tales from a Small Planet Web site, an unofficial resource for post research. Insights differs because it offers unofficial opinions written only by diplomatic passport holders. The concerns of U.S. mission workers are unique, and Insights includes practical views on such matters as the post housing policy and special considerations for singles. Also, there are many more Insights available for each post than there are Real Post Reports.

**"Personal Post Insights helped me get a feel for morale and what life would really be like at post, and helped me sort my choices into highs, mediums and lows. Some of the Insights actually caused me to move posts higher up on my list."**



OBC staff members (from left) Connie Hansen, Maureen Johnston (seated) and Kelley Crowder-Smith assist bidders through personal service at FSI's Overseas Briefing Center and online through the Post Info To Go system.

“Personal Post Insights helped me get a feel for morale and what life would really be like at post, and helped me sort my choices into highs, mediums and lows,” said Kim Strollo, a recent graduate of FSI’s A-100 course for new FSOs. “Some of the Insights actually caused me to move posts higher up on my list.”

### Best Image Forward

FSOs who are bidding on jobs are not the only ones who know about these resources. Posts’ management, human resource and general service officers also say Post Info To Go saves time in answering the most frequently asked questions from family members and bidders. By culling from existing documents in the Post Info To Go database and forwarding them in one easy action, posts having updated materials can present their best image.

“It is essential for posts to maintain up-to-date and high-quality materials at OBC since, in many cases, information I discovered there weighed heavily on a decision as to whether to bid or not,” said Williamson. “For example, a fixed post policy on pets, with zero flexibility, and a policy indicating that the GSO and host nation would consider special circumstances on pets are two extremes that reflect very different decision factors.”

Post Info To Go also offers access to some of OBC’s 800 audio-

visual programs. From PowerPoint presentations to community photos, these items sometimes provide a first glimpse of a post for a potential bidder.

Post videos are another audio-visual resource at the OBC. There are 19 post on-demand videos accessible online via BNET at [http://obc.bnet.state.gov/category.asp?category\\_id=146](http://obc.bnet.state.gov/category.asp?category_id=146), and more will soon be available. OBC encourages all posts to update their audio-visuals.

To provide access to OBC’s audio-visual offerings for those without OpenNet access, OBC recently sponsored a Clips to Go contest during its 30th anniversary celebration. The contest submissions show personal perspectives of life at post. The winning video clips were submitted by Carlos Gallardo, of the U.S. Consulate in Amsterdam, and David H. Kornhauser, formerly of the U.S. Embassy in Vienna. To view the winning clips, go to <http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/92015.htm>.

When it comes to finding answers quickly, OBC helps bidders streamline the process. Resources are available at <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/default.asp?sec=Overseas%20Briefing%20Center> or on the Internet at <http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c6954.htm>.

*The author is a writer-editor with the Transition Center.*

## Tips for Making a Post Video By Kate Goggin

Because the truth about a post can be hard to discern, audio-visual offerings help complete the picture for bidders. To produce and submit a new post video for the OBC collection, consider these factors.

**Watch production costs** (time, personnel and equipment needed) and note the good video examples, available at <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/default.asp?Sec=Overseas%20Briefing%20Center&Cat=Audiovisuals>.

**Interviews should be brief.** An ambassador's introduction is a standard practice, but the video should also include unrehearsed mid- and lower-level officer interviews.

**DVDs are the preferred medium.** To be compatible with U.S. standards, create the DVD in the Region 1 format (United States and its territories, and Canada) to play on NTSC-compatible players.

**Provide honest information** regarding road conditions, poverty, floods and other realities of the post.

**Follow BNET guidelines** if you want your OBC post video to be considered for BNET broadcast. Additional guidelines are at <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/default.asp?Sec=Overseas%20Briefing%20Center&Cat=Audiovisuals>.

Here are some recommendations on the video's content:

### Housing

(This is a major topic for viewers so devote substantial time to it.) Show interiors and exteriors, and identify housing by position (entry-level, mid-level and senior level), never by occupant name. Note the type of housing (U.S.-owned, leased, etc.) and narrate all footage. Describe typical features, differences from U.S. standards (appliances, storage, high ceilings, flooring, layout and yard size) and its location and travel time from work, shopping and schools.

### Workplace Overview

Following proper security procedures, include exterior views of the embassy or consulate, separately located offices, medical facilities and the cafeteria.

### City Overview

Show major thoroughfares with narration mentioning typical weather, traffic and parking, and other essentials.

### Shopping

Briefly show typical shopping locations, and explain what is and is not available.

### Community Life

Include narrated footage of recreational facilities, places of worship, restaurants and common travel destinations.

### Schools

Place this last so that people without children can skip it. Include shots of buildings, playgrounds, sports fields, libraries and activities. If there are several schools at post, limited views of each should be included, preferably showing students and teachers, within proper security parameters. Mention typical travel times, special features, programs of study and other relevant facts. ■





A U.S. Air Force crew unloads blankets and tents purchased locally through the Red Cross with funds donated by USAID.

# FAST ACTION

## EMBASSY LIMA PROVIDES EARTHQUAKE RELIEF **BY VAN S. WUNDER, III**

For most people, 15 seconds of an earthquake is long enough to create a life-long memory. But just as darkness fell on the evening of August 15, the earth heaved and trembled for more than two minutes along the central Peruvian coast, shocking the nine million residents of Lima but leaving catastrophic damage in cities 100 miles south.

News reports said the quake measured a massive 8.0 on the Richter scale. For those at the U.S. Embassy in Lima, it was as close to the “big one” as anyone wanted to get.

By sunup on August 16, Embassy Lima was already preparing a team to go to the stricken area to check on the status of American citizens and assess assistance requirements. Ambassador Michael McKinley, in country only a week and not yet fully credentialed, quickly obtained authorization to tap \$100,000 in disaster relief funds and asked a team of embassy officers from the consular and public affairs section, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Military Assistance Advisory Group, the regional security office and the U.S. Navy Medical Research Laboratory in Lima to fly to the Peruvian city of Pisco to check on Americans, carry out a disaster assessment and make recommendations.

### **Wide Response**

Working through well-defined USAID/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance channels, in the following 30 days more than 50 personnel from the Department of State, USAID/Peru, USAID/OFDA, and the MAAG worked in the affected areas, conducting assessments, coordinating with the Peruvian government and aid organizations, providing emergency medical treatment, delivering relief supplies and assisting Americans.

By August 29, Ambassador McKinley had presented his credentials and could visit the Pisco region. Peru and the international community had responded overwhelmingly to the immediate disaster, moving more than 700 tons of relief supplies by air and thousands of tons more by sea and land. Although the area is recovering quickly from the initial shock, the daunting challenge of rebuilding will require years of coordinated effort. More than 60,000 households were destroyed, more than 500 people were killed and more than 4,000 were injured. More than 200,000 people and hundreds of businesses had their lives and operations disrupted.

Because the coastal highway leading to the area was badly damaged, the Embassy team used a U.S. government aircraft to



fly to a Peruvian air force base outside Pisco. Although the base was badly damaged by the quake and subsequent “mini tsunami” and without electricity or water, the runway was still operational. Buildings at the base quickly became the hub for coordinating all relief activity.

The embassy team arrived the day after the earthquake and found the region without electricity or water and its streets filled with rubble. Peruvian President Alan Garcia and more than half of the Peruvian Cabinet were at the air base and already organizing disaster relief. The embassy team joined this effort, working with Peruvian officials and representatives from major local and international nongovernmental organizations to get shelter, blankets and medical help to the victims.

### **Needs Assessed**

USAID Mission Disaster Relief Officer Jessica Jordan, who had previous experience in disaster relief, and Assistant Mission Disaster Relief Officer Steve Olive worked with Peruvian and international NGOs to gauge the immediate and medium-term relief needs and coordinate USAID’s response. U.S. Navy Cmdr. John Sanders, of the Naval laboratory in Lima, served as the embassy’s on-scene public health specialist and adviser on health needs.

By August 18, a USAID/OFDA assessment team led by Phil Gelman, USAID/OFDA’s team leader for its Peruvian disaster response, was on the ground, providing expert advice to the embassy and Washington on assistance requirements.

By chance, a group of U.S. military doctors and medical students had been traveling near Pisco and had experienced the devastating quake firsthand. Luckily, none of the group was injured, and the whole group went immediately to downtown Pisco on the morning of August 16 to provide invaluable first-responder care and eyewitness information to the embassy on the damage and medical needs.

The embassy’s consular team had some of the most challenging jobs, running down sketchy information on almost 300 Americans reportedly in the area. After several days of checking with makeshift medical clinics and morgue staff, consular staff investigated all 300 cases and confirmed that no American had been killed, but several had to be helped to leave the area.

In the month after the quake, the United States provided \$3.15 million in humanitarian assistance. USAID/OFDA provided \$1.5 million through USAID/Peru to implementing partners, including the Peruvian Red Cross, CARE International, Caritas and World Vision, to support relief efforts. In addition to financial assistance,

USAID/OFDA delivered emergency relief commodities via three airlifts to Peru, including four 10,000-liter water bladders, 7,800 10-liter water containers, 500 body bags, 1,100 rolls of plastic sheeting and 15,000 blankets. USAID/OFDA also provided an office support module for the U.N. Disaster Assessment and Coordination team.

### **Military Help**

The U.S. military stepped in immediately after the disaster with medical help, flying in the Southern Command’s Field Surgical Team from Honduras and later diverting a previously scheduled 14-member MEDRETE to work in the Pisco area. In the first week after the quake, U.S. military medical teams treated more than 1,500 Peruvians, while the Naval lab in Lima provided a crucially important field medical laboratory to monitor possible outbreaks of the infectious diseases that often follow such disasters.



USAID Peru Disaster Relief Officer Jessica Jordan, center, and community leader Carmen Saravia, right, brief Ambassador Michael McKinley on earthquake assistance efforts in Pisco on August 29.

In all, the U.S. Air Force made eight C-130 Hercules flights to the area in four days, delivering the medical teams and their equipment and more than 80 tons of relief supplies.

The U.S. private and nongovernmental sectors also provided immediate and important assistance. A nearby U.S.-led consortium for a natural gas shipping terminal project immediately sent earth-moving equipment to Pisco to clear rubble, repair bridges and build bypasses and detours to enable road traffic to restart. U.S. NGOs arrived quickly on the scene to provide shelters and supplies. All told, more than 30 U.S. firms contributed immediate help in Pisco.

The August 15 quake challenged the entire embassy team and showed once again that every element of a mission overseas has something valuable to offer in an emergency. Everyone living in Peru knows there will be more earthquakes, and the next one could be in the capital. The Peruvian government, the embassy and the business community are all taking the Pisco quake as a “dress rehearsal” for what could be even bigger future challenges. This time, the embassy was lucky, but the experience provided an all-too-real disaster test for the mission community. The embassy and U.S. government responded quickly and with much needed—and much appreciated—aid but also gained valuable experience on preparing for an event that could be even worse. ■

*The author is the public affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy in Lima.*

First Lady Laura Bush gives a hug to 10-year-old Aisha Garuba in January 2006 after being presented with flowers upon her arrival in Accra.



# CLOSE TIES

EMBASSY HELPS GHANA CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

**BY CHRISTOPHER W. HODGES**

When Ghana gained its independence from Great Britain on March 6, 1957, Vice President Richard Nixon led the U.S. delegation and Martin Luther King, Jr. was among the luminaries present. Fifty years later, despite political setbacks throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Ghana's ties to the United States are strong, and it has assumed a leadership role in Africa as a flourishing democracy. Ghana is now on the United Nations Security Council, and its President, John A. Kufuor, is chairman of the African Union.

Ghana has also made great strides economically, and poverty has fallen to 28 percent in 2006 from 40 percent in 1998–1999. Ghana exported \$3.9 billion of goods in 2006, including significant quanti-

ties of cocoa and gold.

The U.S.-Ghana relationship mirrors Ghana's growth and dynamism. The newly inaugurated U.S. embassy compound in Accra houses the USAID and USAID-West Africa missions, and the embassy has a resident adviser to help disburse Ghana's \$547 million Millennium Challenge Compact, one of the program's largest. Ghana hosted the world's first deployment of Peace Corps volunteers in 1961 and today has 144 volunteers.

## Celebrating 50 Years

Ghana's 2007 Jubilee celebration was filled with many special moments. The embassy sponsored celebrations under the theme "Ghana-U.S.@50: Looking Back,

Moving Forward." The celebrations started with a visit from former President Jimmy Carter, who toured the country and was the guest of honor at a reception held by Ambassador Pamela Bridgewater.

Celebrations continued on a particularly American note with the arrival of a Major League Baseball delegation to promote the game among Ghanaian youth. Led by New York Mets General Manager Omar Minaya, the delegation included Hall of Famer Dave Winfield, Dusty Baker and Reggie Smith. The group conducted baseball clinics and media outreach, and presented thousands of dollars in equipment to Ghanaian children.

The centerpiece for Ghana's festivities came on March 6 when Ghana celebrated Republic Day and 50 years of freedom. Fifty-



**Above:** Hall of Famer Dave Winfield and New York Mets General Manager Omar Minaya at the MLB baseball clinic in Tema, Ghana. **Below:** Tennis star Serena Williams, left, enters the embassy with Ambassador Pamela Bridgewater.



two heads of state attended the colorful festivities and Secretary for Housing and Urban Development Alphonso Jackson led a presidential delegation that included Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer. The United States Congressional Black Caucus' chair, Representative Carolyn Kilpatrick, also led a delegation to the events, which included a military parade through historic Independence Square and other celebrations. Members of the Caucus also received an embassy briefing.

### **New Compound**

In May, the embassy opened a \$112 million new embassy compound that will serve as a central location for a mission staff that had been scattered in locations throughout the city. The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations' Director, General Charles E. Williams, joined Ambassador Bridgewater and Ghana's Vice President Ghana Alhaji Aliu Mahama to inaugurate the building.

For its July 4 celebration, the embassy commemorated this very special year in Ghana's history with a Capitol Fourth picnic and concert. Former Foreign Minister Nana Akuffo Addo represented Ghana's government, and the evening event at the ambassador's residence included replicas of such landmarks as the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument and Capitol Building that were designed and painted by local embassy staff. There were also individual souvenir picnic baskets brimming with American treats and a color commemorative booklet for each guest. A highlight was the performance of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, which came to Ghana for a 10-day tour of the country that showcased their unique brand of Negro spirituals and contemporary classics.

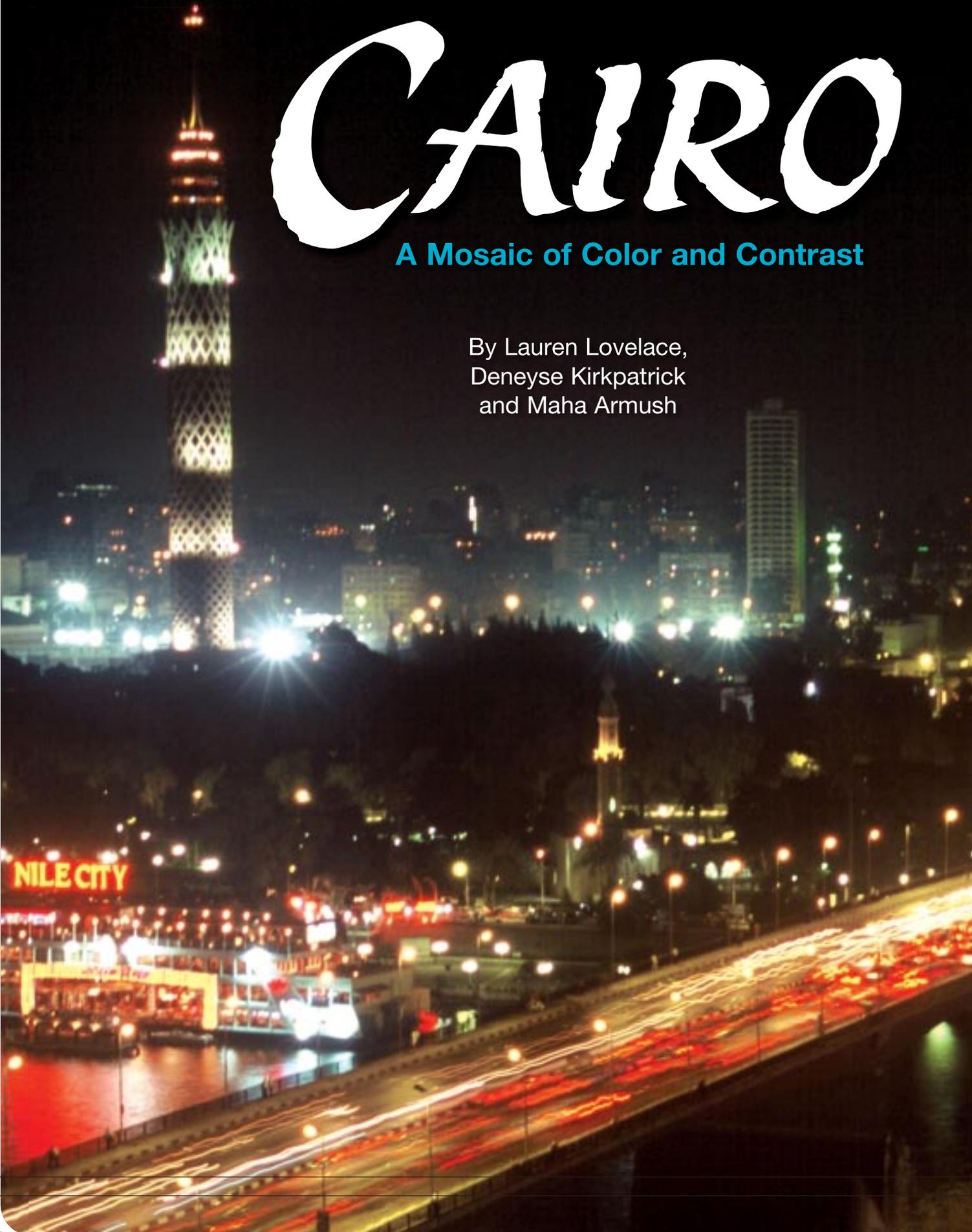
In August, the Morgan State University Choir visited during Ghana's Diaspora Month, when William and Mary College hosted an Omuhundro Institute-Ghana Historical Society conference on the history of the slave trade. The singing group performed for an overflow audience at the National Theater, where General William "Kip" Ward, a Morgan alumnus and commander of the U.S. military's African Command, was guest of honor. The MSU choir's voices and workshops were a hit throughout the country, uniting people through the universal language of music. ■

*The author is the public affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy in Ghana.*

# CAIRO

**A Mosaic of Color and Contrast**

By Lauren Lovelace,  
Deneysel Kirkpatrick  
and Maha Armush





A nighttime view of central Cairo, where 17 million Egyptians live.

## POST OF THE MONTH>>>

# Cairo, Egypt



**COUNTRY>>>** Egypt

**CAPITAL>>>** Cairo

**TOTAL AREA>>>** 1,001,450 square kilometers

**APPROXIMATE SIZE>>>** More than three times the size of New Mexico

**GOVERNMENT>>>** Republic

**INDEPENDENCE>>>** February 28, 1922 (from the United Kingdom)

**POPULATION>>>** 80.3 million

**LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH>>>** 72 years

**RELIGIONS>>>** Muslim (mostly Sunni), Coptic and Christian

**LANGUAGES>>>** Arabic (official), English and French

**CURRENCY>>>** Egyptian pound (EGP)

**PER CAPITA INCOME>>>** \$4,200

**IMPORT PARTNERS>>>** United States (11.3 percent), China (8.2 percent) and Germany (6.3 percent)

**EXPORT PARTNERS>>>** Italy (12.1 percent), United States (11.3 percent) and Spain (8.5 percent)

**INTERNET COUNTRY CODE>>>** .eg

A young man zooms by on a bicycle, a six-foot tray loaded with flat bread balanced on his head. He is focused on the veering traffic, but as he passes he offers a welcome. This is Cairo.

On the other side of the street, a donkey cart pulls up in front of a bookstore café where young women in head coverings and jeans order iced lattes and read Noam Chomsky essays.

Like the mosaic tile work in Al Azhar, the oldest institution of Islamic learning in the world, Cairo and its 17 million people are studies in color and contrast united by a common theme—hospitality.



PHOTOGRAPHS: (ABOVE) HEATH COX; (OPPOSITE PAGE) LAUREN LOVEAGE



**Opposite page:** Morning in Cairo means bicyclists bearing trays of bread. **Above:** Participants in the Bureau of Information Resource Management's Mission Day learn about other sections and offices.

### MISSION PRIORITIES

The U.S. Mission to Egypt reaches out to the Egyptian people to advance peace, democracy and prosperity. These priorities guide the work of the 1,800 people and 48 U.S. agencies at the embassy in historic Garden City. They include one of the largest U.S. Agency for International Development missions in the world, the Naval Assistance Medical Research Unit-III, the Library of Congress and the Drug Enforcement Administration. The mission's work is also advanced by the American Center in Alexandria.

Members of the mission community often reflect on the vitality and spirit of one of the world's most ancient and beautiful cities.

"Every morning, as I walk into the sunny courtyard of the U.S. Embassy, a smiling Egyptian colleague wishes me a day full of jasmine flowers," said Natasha Greer, who returned to Cairo to serve as an office management specialist after a decade away. "Whether you are an extrovert with a passion for exploration or an introvert looking for a peaceful spot to read a book, you will be able to find your perfect place in Cairo. The noise, pollution and crazy traffic

will dissipate in the smiles of people who welcome you everywhere."

Egypt is the most populous country in the Middle East and the second most populous in Africa. The Arabic word for Egypt, Misr, means metropolis. Cairo is the cultural capital of the Arab world, and contains Saladin's Citadel, world-famous bazaars, medieval palaces and dozens of museums and cultural centers featuring art exhibits, concerts, plays, dance troupes and film screenings.

"When I was first assigned to Cairo, I remembered my days as a student at the American University here," says Vice Consul Maha Armush. "I recalled my experience teaching salsa dancing at a local dance studio and the excitement and intensity of the city's night life. Cairo is a cultural center where you can be mesmerized by the architecture and feel the local flavor in the streets as people hustle by. While the intensity can be overwhelming, I feel safe and welcomed here. Even the children extend their arms to greet you."

### RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE

Cairo is home to an impressive collection of Islamic architecture. About 90 percent of Egyptians are Muslims, but

several million are Coptic Christians, one of the oldest sects of Christianity and another important source of religious art and architecture.

Of the seven wonders of the ancient world only the Great Pyramids of Giza remain. Egyptian tourism sites at Karnak, Luxor and Abu Simbel span 5,000 years of history and continue to awe visitors.

Popular sporting and social activities include horse and camel riding on the outskirts of the desert, golfing next to the pyramids, fishing and diving in the Red Sea and Egypt's beloved national sport, soccer. These activities may be enjoyed despite Cairo's notorious traffic and air pollution.

Egypt is famous for such leaders as Cleopatra, King Tutankhamun and Saladin. Modern chiefs of state like Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat also left their mark on world history. President Hosni Mubarak has ruled the country since 1981.

The U.S. Mission actively supports democratic reform through a variety of programs with the government of Egypt and Egypt's growing civil society.

The Egyptian-American relationship, bolstered by the historic Camp David

Ambassador Francis Ricciardone visits a USAID-supported agricultural project in Qena.



An Egyptian boy clowns around with a saxophone player in the American band Ozomatli.



PHOTOGRAPHS: (TOP) LAUREN LOVEFACE; (BOTTOM): FADI GWANIS; (OPPOSITE PAGE LEFT): VICTORIA PEPPER; (RIGHT): CAMHO AMERICAN COLLEGE



The Ibn Touloun mosque is famous for its minaret with an outside spiral ladder.



Cairo American College graduates toss their caps in the air at the pyramids of Giza.

Peace Agreement between Egypt and Israel in 1979, is one of the world's most vital partnerships for peace in a region of historic conflict. Egypt and the United States also have a common bond in fighting terrorism and cooperate on a variety of fronts.

The embassy's Office of Military Cooperation administers more than \$1.3 billion in annual U.S. military assistance to Egypt. A steady flow of U.S. cabinet-level guests often includes Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, as well as other distinguished government and private experts and many congressional delegations.

USAID has operated in Egypt since 1975 and has been critical to the country's infrastructure development and economic prosperity. Millions of Egyptians enjoy a higher quality of life because of American support. Since 2000, USAID has encouraged Egypt's transition from "aid to trade," together with the embassy's Foreign Commercial Service, Foreign Agricultural Service and economic section.

### FAMILY LIFE

In addition to its commitment to advance the U.S.-Egyptian relationship, the embassy supports the well-being of the official American and Egyptian community by providing educational and family employment opportunities and social and cultural activities.

"The embassy community and the local community make this an excellent family post," said Will Lanzet, an information programs specialist. "Whatever our children's strengths and interests, the educational and social opportunities they receive in Cairo are outstanding. The K-12 Cairo American College rates as of the best international schools in the world. In addition to exceptional academic departments, the performing arts and athletic departments are noteworthy. Our oldest, who graduated from CAC in 2003, found he was very well-prepared for continuing his education at the university level."

Assistant Human Resources Officer Deneysel Kirkpatrick said, "During the first quarter of 2007, the Strategic Network Assistance Program identified

more than 352 jobs in the local economy. The opportunities for family members abound, and there is really something for everyone."

A day at Embassy Cairo can involve professional development training, a visit to Arab League headquarters, a discussion with students in Arabic about the Middle East, a sampling of sugarcane juice produced by a recipient of a USAID micro-loan or even a night dancing to an embassy-sponsored musical group like the Latin hip-hop band Ozomatli.

"Ozomatli's tour of Egypt is the biggest program the public affairs section has done in years and had a huge impact," said Public Affairs Counselor Haynes Mahoney, citing the band's performances in Qait Bey, Alexandria, the Cairo Citadel and in neighborhoods, jamming with local musicians.

Through daily activities such as consular assistance, political and economic dialogue and cultural outreach, individuals from all sections of the mission advance the goals of peace, democracy and prosperity while contributing to the fascinating mosaic that is modern Egypt. ■

*Lauren Lovelace was assistant information officer at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo and now serves as an International Visitors program assistant in New York. Deneysel Kirkpatrick is the assistant human resources officer at the embassy, and Maha Armush is a vice consul in the consular section.*

## READING MATERIAL

Want to read more about Egypt? Management Officer and bibliophile Raymond Maxwell suggests:

- Cairo, City of Sand* by Maria Golia, AUC Press
- Cairo, A City Victorious* by Max Rodenbeck
- Palace Walk* by Naguib Mahfouz
- Alexandria Quartet* by Lawrence Durrell
- The Blue Nile* and *The White Nile* by Alan Moorehead
- ...and of course <http://egypt.usembassy.gov>

# FRAUD-BUSTERS

What did you do on your summer vacation? The answer to that age-old question rarely includes reading someone else's love letters, analyzing handwriting samples or going online to dig up evidence of illegal cohabitation, but for a group of eight summer-hire students at the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong this was exactly their work.

For instance, they came across a fiancé-visa application claiming: "We may have grown oceans apart, but our hearts

beat as one, and I love you more than my three other wives, and I promise to disable my profile on foreignaffair.com if you ignore my drunk-driving conviction and marry me."

Every year, approximately half a million aliens enter the United States after being issued immigrant visas. Security measures have increased, but many aliens still manage to obtain fraudulent visas. The key to fighting fraud is intercepting such aliens before they land in the United States—and at

Consulate General Hong Kong, the staff of the fraud prevention unit attacks this task with vigor.

Once an immigrant- or fiancé-visa petition arrives in Hong Kong, the immigrant visa unit begins evaluating the applicant's bona fides. Cases with fraud indicators are referred to the FPU for more thorough investigation. Although these investigations are usually conducted by consular officers, in June 2007 Fraud Prevention Manager Casey Graham and Locally Employed Fraud Inves-

tigator Peggy Au saw a win-win situation with the arrival of eight summer hires.

## STRIKING GOLD

By the end of the first week, Graham and Au knew they had struck gold. The summer-hires—Enrique Cancel-Vargas, Richie Cabling, Brittany Britto, Kenneth Marut, Carolyn Marut, Edwin McClannan, Annaliese Johnsen and Kaley Hodel—were combing through applicant files looking for suggestions of fraudulent activity.

The summer-hires conduct interviews. From left, rear, Enrique Cancel-Vargas; front, Richie Cabling and Edwin McClannan.



SUMMER HIRES ASSESS VISA-SEEKERS IN HONG KONG

**BY CATHERINE T. GRAHAM, CAROLYN MARUT  
AND ENRIQUE CANCEL-VARGUS**



The summer sleuths in action. From left, back row, Annaliese Johnson, Kaley Hodell, Edwin McClannan and Kenneth Marut. Front row, from left: Enrique Cancel-Vargas, Carolyn Marut and Richie Cabling.

After spending more than a week investigating the documents in their cases, the students drafted questions for each interview and highlighted the weak points in the applicant's case. Cancel-Vargas said he was surprised to find that, even after hours of questioning, he could not account for all of the inconsistencies in one of his cases.

The students worked together and used the Internet to their advantage. Richie Cabling's Filipino background and language skills were invaluable.

Kenneth Marut pored through an applicant's photo album for clues belying her claims that she was a full-time babysitter.

Working on their third suspected fraud case, Carolyn Marut and Johnsen couldn't help but laugh when they noticed a major inconsistency with the greeting cards presented as proof of relationship. The applicant submitted 30 greeting cards allegedly spanning decades—one for each year she and the petitioner had known each other. The

cards looked brand new and all had the company's Web site marked on the back. Carolyn Marut and Johnsen quickly pointed out that American Greetings didn't have a Web site 30 years ago.

"It was the first of many clues that it was a fraudulent case," Carolyn Marut said.

#### **NO VALUE JUDGMENTS**

Graham and Au made clear to the students that the applicants weren't bad people but only hoped to find a better future for themselves and their families in the United States. Hodell and Britto, therefore, learned to focus on evaluating the relationship, reviewing the marital history of the applicants and reviewing the documents in each case—not whether the applicants were "good" or "bad." In the end,

they realized there is only one question FPU personnel have to answer—Is this marriage for immigration purposes only?

The mentoring and training paid off. The students worked on six cases and all six were withdrawn once the applicant or petitioner was presented with the mountain of evidence and inconsistencies in their cases. Graham and Au also recognized early in the summer that involving the students in fraud work could be a powerful recruiting tool. Several of the students, including McClannan, came away with an interest in State Department careers. ■

*Catherine T. Graham is a fraud prevention manager at Consulate General Hong Kong, and Carolyn Marut and Enrique Cancel-Vargas were summer-hire students at that post.*

*In the end, they realized there is only one question FPU personnel have to answer—Is this marriage for immigration purposes only?*



Actress Ingrid Bergman once said that movies can give ordinary people a trip “deep into the twilight of the soul.” While most diplomatic professionals embark on a slightly less ambitious journey, there is no denying that movies can provide a glimpse into a culture’s values, history and traditions, and often transport people to other times and places. Recognizing the appeal of the silver screen, the U.S. Embassy in Moscow launched a public diplomacy outreach program in Russia that uses films to discuss American culture and language in the classroom.

This American Values through Film project offers seven films to Russian university and secondary school teachers of English or American Studies. We chose popular movies that were either classics, rich in historical detail or seemed to be platforms for discussing American values. The films are *Dances with Wolves*, *High Noon*, *Seabiscuit*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Twelve Angry Men*, *All the President’s Men* and *Erin Brockovich*.

### Lesson Plans

Many teachers took advantage of our offer with great enthusiasm, including those who teach about America in Russian or in English. We asked those who received the films to write one lesson plan for each film and use it to discuss values and draw students into discussions about U.S. life and institutions.

We received lesson plans from teachers from 18 cities and used them to produce a CD-ROM on each film. The teachers created more than 1,000 pages of lesson plans, which included discussions, language-learning activities and role plays with transcripts from the films.

The CDs were distributed to teachers across Russia and to American Corners and Centers, and each American Corner received a copy of the seven films. Later, teachers involved in the project gave presentations in their communities or at major conferences, showing other teachers how to integrate film into classrooms.

Though the project focused on American values, the teachers also discussed the values of their culture, saying it was easier to do this when looking at another culture’s values.

# Twilight of the Soul

FILMS TEACH RUSSIANS ABOUT AMERICAN VALUES **BY BRIDGET GERSTEN**

Natalya, a teacher in Omsk, said there were challenges, but she overcame them.

“My colleagues and I weren’t sure we could write a lesson plan for each film in the beginning, but once we started using the films with our students, we even got ideas from them on how to make the film-viewing interesting,” she said. “Students liked talking about the movies, even the older ones that they had never heard of. It was a great experience to share what we teachers knew about America.”

### Similarities Noted

Anna, a young teacher in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk, said “Films are just one way to look for similarities between our cultures, like the idea that there are native peoples of America and native peoples of Russia who have their own languages and identities.”

Other teachers liked creating their own teaching materials based on American themes for classroom use and enjoyed comparing their lessons with those of distant colleagues. Many also were proud to contribute to the CD, especially because it assisted their careers and let them share material with other colleagues.

Stephanie Funderburg, a senior English language fellow at the consulate in Novosibirsk, said the films showed the similarities between American and Russian cultures and values.

“Students could synthesize key points in the films and draw similarities between Russian and American cultures,” she said, noting that the teachers enjoyed the American movies, too. “They were eager to enhance their English and learn about American culture, all while watching a feature film.”

She also said the lesson plans had high credibility, since they were written by Russian educators.

The CD-ROM also contained material to give teachers more ideas on how to use films to combine the study of language, culture and values. This included an introduction to using movies in a classroom, descriptions of each movie, copyright guidelines, a lesson plan checklist and online and standard bibliography.

### Beyond Classrooms

We found that the films and teaching materials on the CD-ROM could be used outside classrooms. Some examples are film festivals, American Days, American Center and Corners events (where Corners have

University students in Vladivostok think about how *Erin Brockovich* can be used in class.



Vladivostok PAO Bridget Gersten, left, and university students pool ideas on how films can be used in the classroom.

licenses to show films to small audiences for noncommercial purposes) and in research projects. Themes for discussion include corporate responsibility, honesty in politics, the power of perseverance and positive thinking, whistle-blowing, race relations, tolerance and diversity.

This year marks 200 years of U.S.-Russian diplomatic relations, and the project was a great example of Russian-American collaboration. It is also a resource

for public diplomacy outreach to teachers, alumni, students and youth. A link to the lesson plans is on our Web site, <http://vladivostok.usconsulate.gov/elf.html>, which links to Embassy Moscow’s English Language Office. Posts can download these materials for distribution to classrooms or demonstrations. ■

*The author is the public affairs officer at the U.S. Consulate in Vladivostok.*



Richard Margolis stands beside the Franklin medallion, which he donated.

# Benefactors' Beneficence

NEW ACQUISITIONS GRACE DIPLOMATIC RECEPTION ROOMS **BY ED WARNER**

Visitors to the Diplomatic Reception Rooms on the eighth floor of Main State may notice several new pieces of Americana in a collection of artifacts said to rival that of several major U.S. museums. The gifts for 2006 include a Massachusetts tray table, circa 1750, which graces the John Quincy Adams State Drawing Room. Funds for the table were donated by Juli and David Grainger of Winnetka, Ill.

In the Entrance Hall, meanwhile, is a hand-colored map of the Western Hemisphere, circa 1634. At its top is a border made of scenes and town plans from

what were then the hemisphere's major cities, such as Havana and Cartagena. Along its sides are drawings of native people from across the two continents. The map is a gift from Thomas J. O'Donnell.

Another gift is a terra-cotta medallion depicting the father of American diplomacy, Benjamin Franklin. Issued in 1779 to commemorate Franklin's appointment as U.S. representative to the court of King Louis XVI, the medallion is one of only three. It is the only grand module medallion of the statesman and inventor owned by the Reception Rooms, said Lynn Turner, the

Rooms' collections manager and registrar.

Other gifts include a 15-by-24-foot Persian rug in the James Monroe Reception Room, donated by Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Rosenthal, and a series of Gilbert Stuart portraits of the first five American presidents, donated by Dr. Catherine C. Lastavica. The portraits are reproductions of those hanging in the National Gallery of Art.

During 2006, the Reception Rooms raised \$640,137 from donors, which will go toward maintenance and conservation of the collection, Turner said. To thank the

Marcee Craighill, acting director of the Reception Rooms, examines the recently acquired 17th century map of the Western Hemisphere.



2006 donors, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice hosted the annual reception in the Rooms in April.

“Each year, thanks to the outstanding support of our donors, we enhance this remarkable showcase of American history,” she said.

The Secretary also honored Gail Serfaty, who was retiring after more than 41 years with the State Department. Serfaty started as an assistant to the Rooms’ curator and ended as director of the Rooms. The Secretary said Serfaty “oversaw the transformation of these rooms, working closely with each donor, each architect, each craftsman.”

The four elevators serving Main State’s eighth floor were renovated in August with paneling of burlled elm and mahogany. The work was underwritten by the Fund for the Endowment of the Diplomatic Reception Rooms, a separate endowment fund for special projects financed by private citizen donations, Turner said. ■

*Ed Warner is deputy editor of State Magazine.*

## DONOR GENEROSITY

### Donors Who Gave \$10,000 or More in 2006

Helen Harting Abell	Louisville, Ky.
Sandra Goerlich Alexander and Mr. and Mrs. Braddock James Alexander	Temperance, Mich.
Otto M. Budig, Jr. and Melody Sawyer Richardson	Cincinnati, Ohio
Eugene B. Casey Foundation	Gaithersburg, Md.
Mr. and Mrs. David Grainger	Winnetka, Ill.
Mr. David Hayworth	High Point, N.C.
John Jay Hopkins Foundation	Manhattan Beach, Calif.
Mr. and Mrs. Norman V. Kinsey	Shreveport, La.
F. M. Kirby Foundation, Inc.	Morristown, N.J.
Mrs. D. Williams Parker	Thomasville, Ga.
Williams Family Foundation of Georgia, Inc.	Thomasville, Ga.



Roberta Mather offers a welcoming smile at GPS' offices.

# Accommodating Effort

DEPARTMENT LEVELS PLAYING FIELD FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES **BY ED WARNER**

Aspiring do-gooders take note: If you see a blind person crossing the street, don't rush up and grab them.

It's better to walk up and ask whether they need help or offer your arm, according to Patricia Pittarelli, chief of Work Life Programs in the Bureau of Human Resources' Office of Employee Relations.

That offer of a helping arm is analogous to the State Department's efforts to meet the needs of employees with disabilities. To provide "reasonable accommodations" to employees with disabilities and Department of State visitors, as the law requires, Pittarelli turns to five HR/ER colleagues and five reader-assistants to make available a

range of services. Some services focus on technology; for instance, a large-screen monitor or specialized software that converts text into spoken words. Another accommodation may involve a voice-activated recorder to record work assignments for an employee with a learning disability. Such an employee may process information better from hearing instructions versus reading written text.

Approximately 500 Department employees receive some job-related accommodation, although it's likely the Department has more employees with disabilities who have not requested an accommodation. For instance, a study by

the Job Accommodations Network found that only half of identified employees with disabilities needed some accommodation. Furthermore, as the workforce ages, the number of Department employees with disabilities may increase because of normal hearing loss, mobility issues and other factors.

The Office of Civil Rights also promotes awareness of disability-related issues. OCR has many initiatives related to disability, and recently hired a full-time Special Emphasis Program coordinator who focuses on disability. OCR supported the recent creation of the Department's Disability Action Group and maintains a Web site, the disABILITY Gateway (<http://socr.state.gov>) with information on disability issues, guidelines for appropriate verbiage, etiquette for

Ambassador John McDonald makes a point during the Department's celebration of National Disability Awareness Month.



employees and a list of Department offices that have programs for those with disabilities. It notes, for instance, that the Office of Emergency Management has a voluntary form for employees with disabilities to use to indicate their mobility needs in cases of emergency evacuation.

“Management is becoming more aware of the issues and barriers to employment,” noted Somer Bessire, Special Emphasis Program coordinator in OCR’s Individuals with Disabilities program.

#### Promoting Equality

Whatever the accommodation or how it changes as an FSO moves to new postings, the Department provides the same opportunities to employees with disabilities as those provided to employees without disabilities, Pittarelli explained.

“We say to posts that an employee with a disability can be expected to perform the same essential functions as any other FSO, and rely on HR/ER to provide the accommo-

dations,” she said.

As a result, Pittarelli said, she has traveled to such world capitals as Bratislava and New Delhi, going to posts in advance of arriving employees with disabilities. Sometimes, this means simply holding a workshop on the etiquette of working with a person with a disability. In other situations, it has meant advocating for the appropriate accommodations, such as assistive technologies for use in secure areas.

Computer modifications and other accommodations can sound expensive, but in fact, the average one-time cost of accommodating an employee with a disability is approximately \$500, according to one study.

Is this investment worth it? It was for Roberta Mather, a Civil Service employee of Global Publishing Solutions who is deaf. Mather began with the Department as a visual communications specialist and has since been promoted to marketing manager for GPS. This job involves extensive verbal communication, and for this task she works

*“We say to posts that an employee with a disability can be expected to perform the same essential functions as any other FSO, and rely on HR/ER to provide the accommodations.”*



Alison Burke answers questions during the celebration of National Disability Awareness Month.

*Mather stressed that she does not see herself as a person with a disability; she just speaks another language, and the Department “is used to working with people who speak a variety of languages.”*

frequently with the Department’s staff interpreters or an on-call sign language interpreter.

Mather stressed that she does not see herself as a person with a disability; she just speaks another language, and the Department “is used to working with people who speak a variety of languages.” Working with an interpreter, Mather has conducted presentations to in-house “clients” of GPS, worked with senior managers, produced multi-media videos/presentations and even led, built and coordinated the Design for Diplomacy symposium.

Accommodations are also provided to employees to make training effective and accessible. For instance, the Foreign Service Institute works with students requesting reasonable accommodations.

#### Promoting Awareness

October was National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and OCR marked the event with a celebration at Main State. Stephanie Haskins, the woman who inspired Shannon Lake, a character with a disability in the comic strip *For Better or Worse*, said she has helped readers understand the hardships faced by a person with developmental disabilities and a speech impairment.

Tyler Matney, from Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network, a human resources consulting firm, pointed out that individuals with disabilities perform equally with their coworkers once they receive accommodations. He also noted that federal hiring of individuals with disabilities supports the President’s new Freedom Initiative.

Also on the program was retired Ambassador John McDonald, who helped make 1981 the Year of the Disabled in the United States and 1982–91 the Decade of the Disabled, as declared by the United Nations. He called for the United States to ratify the United Nation’s pending bill of rights for people with disabilities.

Speaking more broadly, retired FSO Avraham Rabby, one of the Department’s first blind FSOs, said FSOs who have disabilities are proof to foreign audiences of the United States’ openness and vibrancy and promotion of democratic ideals worldwide.

Closing the event was one of DAG’s council members, Alison Burke, who said the DAG will serve as a voice for those with disabilities and provide a forum for them to discuss all types of issues. ■

*The author is deputy editor of State Magazine.*

## Student Records Online

Need your class schedule or an unofficial transcript of training taken through FSI? Visit the Foreign Service Institute Registrar's Office Web page on the Department of State OpenNet at <http://fsi.state.gov/admin/reg>.

## Leadership Training

Leadership training is mandatory for Foreign Service and Civil Service employees at the FS-03/GS-13 levels and above to ensure that they have the necessary preparation for increasing levels of responsibility. FSI's Leadership and Management School offers the required courses to meet these mandatory training requirements and other leadership courses for all FS and GS employees.

## Senior Policy Seminars

FSI's Leadership and Management School offers professional development and policy seminars for senior-level executives of the Department and the foreign affairs/national security community.

For more information contact FSI's Leadership and Management School at (703) 302-6743, [FSILMS@state.gov](mailto:FSILMS@state.gov) or <http://fsiweb.fsi.state.gov/fsi/lms>.

### MANDATORY COURSES

#### FS-3/GS-13

PK245 Basic Leadership Skills

#### FS-2/GS-14

PT207 Intermediate Leadership Skills

#### FS-1/GS-15

PT210 Advanced Leadership Skills

#### Managers and Supervisors

PT107 EEO Diversity Awareness for Managers and Supervisors

#### Newly promoted FS-OC/SES

PT133 Senior Executive Threshold Seminar

Dates for FSI Transition Center Courses are shown below. For information on all the courses available at FSI, visit the Schedule of Courses on OpenNet at <http://fsi.state.gov>. See Department Notices for announcements of new courses and new course dates and periodic announcements of external training opportunities sponsored by FSI. For additional information, please contact the Office of the Registrar at (703) 302-7144/7137.

#### Security

	Jan	Feb	Length
MQ911 SOS: Security Overseas Seminar	7,22	4,11	2D
MQ912 SOS: Advanced Security Overseas Seminar	2	19	1D
MQ914 SOS: Youth Security Overseas Seminar		2	1D

#### Foreign Service Life Skills

	Jan	Feb	Length
MQ104 Regulations, Allowances, and Finances		21	2D
MQ111 Making Presentations: Design to Delivery		6	3D
MQ116 Protocol and the U.S. Representation Abroad	19	23	1D
MQ203 Singles in the Foreign Service		9	4H
MQ117 Tax Seminar		20	4H
MQ115 Explaining America	26		1D
MQ802 Communicating Across Cultures		2	1D
MQ853 Managing Rental Property	30		2.5H
MQ950 High Stress Assignment Outbriefing Program	11	15	4H

#### Career Transition Center

	Jan	Feb	Length
RV101 Retirement Planning Seminar	28		4D
RV103 Financial Management and Estate Planning	29		1D
RV104 Annuities, Benefits and Social Security	30		1D

Length: H = Hours, D = Days, W = Weeks

## FasTrac Distance Learning: Learn at Your Own Pace, When and Where You Want!

All State Department employees, Foreign Service Nationals and Eligible Family Members are eligible. With your FasTrac password, you may access the entire FasTrac catalog of more than 3,000 courses, from home or office (Intranet or Internet). Courses cover numerous topics, such as project management, computer skills and grammar and

writing skills, as well as soft skills such as leadership. To view the FasTrac catalog, visit the FasTrac Web site at <http://fsi.state.gov/fastrac>.

## FSI Distance Learning

An extensive menu of FSI-developed distance learning courses is also available to eligible participants on the FSI learning management system. See (U) State 009772 dated February 14, 2005, or the FSI Web page (distance learning) for information.



# Improving Healthcare Management

MED IMPLEMENTS QUALITY STANDARD  
**BY ROBERT BURNLEY, M.D., AND  
PAULA DOLAN, R.N., M.P.A.**

On June 29, representatives from TUV America completed a four-day audit and certified that the Office of Medical Services has instituted a quality management system that complies with the International Organization for Standardization's 9001:2000 standards.

We began this journey more than two years ago to improve the management of our services. We had good providers, but needed a system that would allow them to do their best work and demonstrate that to others. The absence of an effective management system led to several problems:

We were solving the same problems repeatedly.

We lacked a mechanism for institutionalizing change.

Every care location performed routine tasks differently. We were a collection of individual health units, rather than a cohesive organization sharing common goals.

There was no periodic assessment of our healthcare processes. We had no objective evidence that we were doing a good job and no idea where our weaknesses were.

We selected ISO 9001 because it was flexible enough to adapt to our complex environment and provided external oversight to confirm our compliance. Briefly, ISO required us to do the following:

- Establish measurable goals.
- Document the processes used to achieve those goals.
- Assess our performance periodically at the provider and senior-management levels.
- Control our documents so that the current version is available where needed.

One key to our success with ISO was the commitment of senior management. Dr. Larry Brown, the medical director, supported this project and visited each section in MED to confirm that commitment and promote participation.

The ISO standards originated in industry, and their language was not particularly healthcare friendly. Therefore, education was a priority. We translated the standards into healthcare jargon and sent weekly newsletters to all employees explaining various requirements in the standards. We held formal classes for 54 individuals and devoted almost 1,000 classroom hours to ISO training. Students were selected from every section and every level in MED. In addition, 26 employees were trained as internal auditors.

Having an outside consultant to help interpret the standards and

guide our compliance efforts was essential. The consultant was a credible, non-threatening resource and helped with the internal audits, which provided additional training for internal auditors.

Documents for the quality management system were written by the quality improvement section and approved by senior management. For our initial management review, each of the roughly 30 persons who took “ownership” of a process presented their goals and metrics. This tedious review required several weeks, but was helpful in identifying areas for improvement in measurement and the presentation of data. In some cases, the results of initial measurements surprised the process owners, so the act of measurement itself stimulated improvement.

The time taken to pay a voucher varied widely, particularly when additional information was needed. The process was refined, and today every customer receives a response within two days of submitting a voucher.

Gaining Drug Enforcement Administration registration for our providers sometimes took more than 60 days. Today, we always complete that task within 48 hours.

As we progressed, some of our process owners began to see themselves as part of a larger process. The staffs of Medical Clearances, Medical Records and the exam clinic now work on a single process for accomplishing clearance exams. We anticipate that, over time, our 30-plus processes will diminish to a single-digit number.

All of this was extra work, initially. We created documents, records, charts and graphs that didn’t exist before.

The day before the final ISO registration audit, we visited each section and used a structured interview to assess opinions about the ISO process. The results were generally positive, even among those who were originally skeptical. Most (83 percent) felt that the process had been helpful, and 92 percent agreed that documents are easier to

find now. Most felt they now do a better job in less time. Financial benefits were hard to identify; those who felt we had saved money pointed to greater efficiency at accomplishing routine tasks.

One of the main benefits cited by everyone was better document control and access to documents. Virtually all documents are kept in one location, and everyone in MED can access any document. The fact that key processes are well-documented means that the new personnel who rotated into MED in the summer inherited well-defined processes that can be refined rather than reinvented.

As a result of the management review process, everyone in MED has a better understanding of what everyone else does. Currently, most process metrics are based on the time it takes to complete a task, so many functions in MED happen faster.

The challenge now is to maintain our momentum and support our quality policy. As we solidify our gains in Washington, we are planning to expand ISO to our overseas health units. ■

## **MED Quality Policy**

The Office of Medical Services will work as a team to continually improve the quality of our patient care and to foster our professional growth.

We will comply with all applicable requirements and continually improve our management system.

We will measure our success through patient and customer satisfaction.

*The authors work in the Office of Medical Services, Quality Improvement.*



Under Secretary for Management Henrietta Fore, second from left, presents the ISO Registration Certificate to, from left, Dr. Robert Burney, Office of Medical Services Director Laurence G. Brown and Paula Dolan.



**Chief of Protocol**

**Nancy Goodman Brinker** of Florida, a former U.S. ambassador to Hungary, is the new Chief of Protocol. She is the founder of Susan G. Komen for the Cure, named for her sister who died of breast cancer. She also founded the Race for the Cure, the world's largest series of 5-kilometer runs and fitness walks. She has served on the National Cancer Advisory Board, President's Cancer Panel and the boards of Manpower, Inc. and U.S. Oncology.



**U.S. Ambassador to Côte D'Ivoire**

**Wanda L. Nesbitt** of Pennsylvania, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Côte D'Ivoire. Previously, she was principal deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Consular Affairs. She was ambassador to Madagascar from 2002 to 2004 and also served overseas in Dar es Salaam, Kigali, Kinshasa, Paris and Port-au-Prince. She is married.

# \* retirements

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| Boris, Rhonda E.       | Johnson, Francis E.    |
| Brooks, Jo             | Johnston, Wileva L.    |
| Brown, Theodore T.     | Kaiser, Robert E.      |
| Brown-Henderson,       | Kmetz, Debra Ann       |
| Gwendolyn C.           | Lowenkron, Barry F.    |
| Burnam, Jeffrey M.     | May, Jacquelin T.      |
| Butler, Emily R.       | McPherson, Sheila T.   |
| Butowsky, Mark M.      | McRoberts, Kathleen L. |
| Cahill Alice M.        | Meyer, Nancy B.        |
| Clodfelter, Mark A.    | Millsap, Marvin E.     |
| Deaner, Stephanie      | Modley, Peter M.       |
| Dunyan, Linda L.       | Peterson, Geraldine H. |
| Evans, Sandra G.       | Reap Jr., Joseph W.    |
| Fisher, Mary Ann       | Ritchie, Sheila M.     |
| Glover, Dorothy B.     | Sartain, Richard J.    |
| Gupta, Sumita          | Serfaty, Gail F.       |
| Haywood, Wilma C.      | Spalt, Douglas R.      |
| Holland Jr., Henry K.  | Vossen, Lesley Moore   |
| Hubbard, Iris D.       | Wilson, David O.       |

**Roger Neil Benson**, 77, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Sept. 18 in Arlington, Va. He joined the Department in 1951 and served overseas in Toronto, Tokyo, Nagoya, Colombo and Seoul. He retired from the Foreign Service in 1981 and continued to work for the Department until 1999. Favorite pastimes included researching his family's genealogy and caring for his bonsai tree collection.



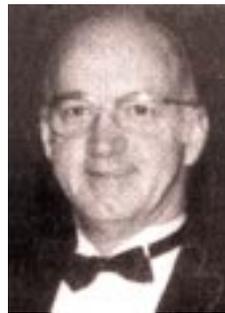
**Lynda Lynn Raftshol**, 54, a Foreign Service office management specialist assigned to Ottawa, died Oct. 2 of breast cancer. She joined the Department in 1988 and served in Dhaka, Quito, Guatemala City, Manila, Frankfurt, Bogota and Ottawa.

**Lucy Singleton Gibb**, 82, a retired Foreign Service employee, died Sept. 9. She joined the Department in 1946 and was posted to New Delhi, but resigned when she married a British army officer. She rejoined the Foreign Service in 1972 and served in Dacca, Manila, Ankara and Islamabad. After retirement, she settled in Richmond, Va., but returned to Pakistan for many winters, where she enjoyed painting.



**Ralph J. Ribble**, 89, a retired Foreign Service officer, died October 15 at home in Clarksville, Texas. He entered the Department of State in April of 1941. From 1943 through 1945 he served in the Navy in the Pacific. He joined the Foreign Service in 1955 and served in Brazil, Panama, Italy and Mexico. He was awarded the Department's Distinguished Honor Award in 1971. He retired to Clarksville in 1972, where he was a gentleman-farmer, traveler and supporter of the Texas Library Association.

**Chester Wilson McElhoe**, 84, a retired Foreign Service budget officer, died Oct. 8 of a heart ailment in Rockville, Md. He lived in Bethesda. He served in the Army during World War II and, after a career with the Army and Air Force, joined the Department in 1965. His overseas postings included Saigon, Vientiane, Amman, Beirut, Ankara and Rome. He retired in 1988. He volunteered at the Washington National Cathedral and participated in archeological digs in Turkey and Romania.



**Gerald H. Walker**, 70, a retired Foreign Service employee, died Sept. 8 of Parkinson's Disease in Pulaski, Va. He served in the Air Force before joining the Department. He retired in 1986. He volunteered with the Internal Revenue Service.

IN THE EVENT OF A DEATH

Questions concerning employee deaths should be directed to the Office of Casualty Assistance at (202) 736-4302. Inquiries concerning deaths of retired employees should be directed to the Office of Retirement at (202) 261-8960.

# Out of the Zone

While perhaps not quite as dramatic as turning swords into plowshares, colleagues at the U.S. embassy in Yerevan and the U.S. Mission to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe are working to turn toxic chemicals into life-sustaining fertilizer in areas of the former Soviet Union. Left over from the missiles deployed by the Soviets throughout their empire, aging fuel tanks are now leaking the deadly mixture of rocket fuel chemicals into the environment. The U.S. provides financial and other support to help convert toxic waste into a positive project.

A key component to the diplomatic mission in Iraq, Provincial Reconstruction Teams operate in the field, away from the well-known “green” zone and up close with the local populace. These eclectic groups include Foreign Service officers, active-duty and reserve soldiers, USAID professionals and members of other agencies. Their purpose is to meet people throughout the provinces; their mandate is to reach out to everyone from the provincial governor to local women’s groups. The goal is to help the Iraqis develop solutions to Iraqi prob-

lems using Iraqi resources.

Researching a post before submitting a bid can be an arduous task, but the Overseas Briefing Center has simplified the job with its Post Info To Go system on its OpenNet Web site. The Center collects in one place information from the post and other sources as diverse as the Family Liaison Office and the Office of Overseas Schools. Potential bidders can find reports on family member employment opportunities, housing photographs, medical resources, security guidelines, pet-related information and school entry requirements. The site also includes a Personal Post Insights collection of first-person opinions about daily life at post.

Doing good can be a sometime incident, done on individual whim, or it can be a systematic, organized program designed to benefit anyone needing—and requesting—a little help to perform to their maximum capability. At the Department, the Office of Civil Rights promotes awareness of disability-related issues, while the Office of Employee Relations provides “reasonable accommodations” through a range of serv-

ices available to employees with disabilities and Department visitors. ER’s Work Life Programs division provides some job-related accommodation to about 500 Department employees, domestic and overseas.

Accommodations can range from the highly technical—large-screen monitors or specialized software that converts text into spoken words or voice-activated recorders to record work assignments—to the extremely personal, such as sign-language interpreters for the hearing-impaired or readers for the visually-impaired.

Last but not least, a final salute to our colleagues en route to their final posting: *Roger Neil Benson; Lucy Singleton Gibb; Chester Wilson McElhoe; Lynda Lynn Raftshol; Ralph J. Ribble; and Gerald H. Walker.*



Rob Wiley  
Editor-in-Chief

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# DO YOU WORK FOR ONE OF THEM? THE SEVEN DEADLY SUPERVISORS

OFFICE DIRECTOR WILL FIZZLER: HAD YOUR JOB BEFORE, SO ALWAYS KNOWS HOW IT COULD BE DONE BETTER.



I WOULD HAVE PUT THIS MEMO ON VISA FEES INTO SONNET FORM.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR MONA POTSOFF: HAS NO LIFE, DOESN'T SEE WHY YOU NEED ONE. HOBBY IS WORK.



IF YOU DON'T GET ME THE LATEST STATS ON BLOWFISH IMPORTS ON SATURDAY, HOW CAN I REVIEW THEM SUNDAY?!?

AMBASSADOR F. LODGEPOLE BREEM: NO LONG-TERM MEMORY WHATSOEVER - SHORT-TERM ALSO SPOTTY



OH, HAD YOU ALREADY ASKED ME FOR TIME OFF AROUND THE HOLIDAYS?

AMBASSADOR E. BIDDEN CLOGRIGHT: CANNOT BE SATISFIED. SCREAMER. MAY BITE.



AAAAH!

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FINN VIGORS: LEARNED EVERYTHING WORTH KNOWING DURING PREVIOUS POSTINGS IN OUTER ICKYSTAN (WHERE YOU'VE NEVER BEEN)



JUST BECAUSE WE'RE SITTING HERE IN RITZOVIA DOESN'T MEAN WE CAN FORGET TO FOCUS ON THE OUTER ICKY PERSPECTIVE!

CONSUL GENERAL PIA SWELDOT: BELIEVES EVALUATION SYSTEM IS TOO FOCUSED ON HIGHLIGHTING EMPLOYEE STRENGTHS, DOWNPLAYS WEAKNESSES



TIME TO GET SOME HONEST CRITICISM INTO THESE EVALUATIONS - STARTING WITH YOURS!

OFFICE DIRECTOR LOIS CRIPES: CANNOT EXHALE WITHOUT GENERATING A TASKING.



WELL NOW THAT YOU'VE GIVEN ME TWO MEMOS YOU KNOW I'LL NEED A THIRD TO EXPLAIN HOW THEY'RE DIFFERENT!



DEC.2007

Yerevan

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Lima

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